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ABSTRACT

Pennsylvania secondary vocational educators were surveyed to determine their commitment to student organizations, community involvement, and their job satisfaction. The 31-item questionnaire assessed the commitment to student organizations (Future Farmers of America, Future Homemakers of America, and Vocational Industrial Clubs of America) and community involvement of a stratified random sample of secondary agricultural educators (N=161), automotive instructors (N=86), carpentry instructors (N=70), and occupational home economics teachers (N=131). Job satisfaction was also compared. A total of 336 of the 448 teachers responded. Characteristics of vocational educators, distribution of respondents and gender, additional occupation, certification, average number of students in program, vocational student organization membership, years taught, age, contract length, American Vocational Association membership, commitment to student organizations and community involvement, and teacher job satisfaction were summarized. Agricultural education teachers were significantly more committed to student organizations than the other teachers surveyed. Vocational student organization rate is the best predictor of commitment to student organizations. Married teachers were significantly less committed to community involvement. There was no difference between teaching areas in regard to job satisfaction. (24 references) (NLA)

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Job Satisfaction and Commitment of Pennsylvania Vocational Educators
to Student Organizations and Community Involvement

Commitment to one's job is perhaps is the best predictor of employee turnover (Siegle & Ruh, 1973; Porter, Steers, Mowday & Boulian, 1974; Porter, Crampon & Smith, 1976; Steers, 1977; Koch & Steers, 1978; Grady, 1989). Extrinsic antecedents such as appropriate salaries, length of occupational tenure, increased age, and entrance into later career stages are positively related to commitment (Steers, 1977; Farrell & Rusbult, 1981; Rhodes, 1983; Morrow & McElroy, 1987).

Since commitment to one's job tends to be an indicator of employee turnover, it is critical that factors be investigated which relate to the commitment of teachers. McCracken and Etuk (1986) found that the two most important antecedents of the commitment of secondary agriculture teachers were: (1) the belief that teachers were making a contribution to the profession and (2) the degree of challenge the teachers believe their job entails. Grady (1989) analyzed relationships between career commitment and turnover of vocational teachers and found as job/role expectations increased, so did commitment.

Phipps (1980) indicated that supervised agricultural experience, the FFA, and classroom/laboratory instruction are integral parts of an agricultural education program. Other vocational teachers are also heavily involved with laboratory instruction and the development of leadership and personal skills through student organizations. For all areas of vocational education, therefore, student organizations are an integral part of the instruction. Bender (1964) and Collins (1977) stated that vocational youth organizations enhance the relevance of vocational and technical education. In addition, vocational youth organizations are assumed to be the basis for expanding students' beneficial experiences above and beyond those provided by general education. Such experiences have been identified as community and civic awareness, career growth, social development, and leadership characteristics (Collins, 1977). While numerous studies have examined organizational commitment, few have focused on the commitment of secondary vocational teachers as it relates to vocational student organizations.

Purpose

The primary purpose of this study was to determine the degree of commitment that vocational educators have to student organizations and commitment to community involvement. Additionally, the job satisfaction of vocational teachers will be assessed. To accomplish the purpose of this study, the following objectives were formulated:

1. To compare how committed secondary agricultural educators, automotive instructors, carpentry instructors, and occupational home economics teachers are to student organizations and community involvement.

2. To determine if selected demographic and programmatic variables can explain the commitment of secondary vocational educators to student organizations and community involvement.

3. To compare how satisfied secondary agricultural educators, automotive instructors, carpentry instructors, and occupational home economics teachers are with their jobs.

Methods and Procedures

Sample

The study was conducted using a design appropriate for descriptive correlational research. The target population included all Pennsylvania secondary agricultural educators, occupational home economics teachers, automotive instructors, and carpentry instructors. These teachers were selected because they advise three of the oldest and largest vocational student organizations (FFA, FHA, and VICA). Instructors with adult education responsibilities were excluded from the population. A stratified random sample consisting of secondary agricultural educators (161), occupational home economics teachers (131), automotive instructors (86) and carpentry instructors (70) were chosen for the study. This sample size was chosen to reflect a 5% margin of error (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970).

Instrumentation

Based on a review of the literature, the researchers developed an instrument consisting of 31 items to measure the commitment of instructors to student organizations, commitment to community involvement, and commitment to pedagogy. The commitment scale was analyzed using exploratory factor analysis (Kim, 1975, p.469). Three factors were identified that influenced a teachers commitment to teaching vocational education: (1) commitment to student organizations, (2) commitment to community involvement , and (3) commitment to pedagogy. Factor analysis allowed constructs of commitment to teaching to be examined through the analysis of correlations among statements and the cluster of items that emerge as factors. In addition to assessing the commitment levels the instrument also measured the occupational satisfaction of vocational teachers using the Brayfield and Rothe Job Satisfaction Job Index (1951) as modified by Warner (1973).

Sociodemographic and programmatic data were collected from the respondents. A panel of experts consisting of five faculty and graduate students in the Department of Agricultural and Extension Education at The Pennsylvania State University indicated that the instrument had good content and face validity. During a pilot test, the scales designed to measure commitment to student organizations and commitment to community involvement were found to be reliable. In addition, data collected from 336 teachers in the sample who responded to a mailed questionnaire were used in estimating the reliability of the commitment scale (Cronbach's alpha of .93). A Cronbach's alpha of .89 was obtained for the Brayfield and Rothe Job Satisfaction Index.

Data Collection and Analysis

The instrument was mailed in March 1990 to 448 teachers chosen for the study. The teachers were given six weeks to respond to the questionnaire. An initial and two follow-up mailings yielded a 75% return rate (336 of 448 teachers). Early and late respondents were compared on their level of commitment to student organizations and selected demographic

characteristics (Miller & Smith, 1983). No statistically significant differences were found between early and late respondents on any of the variables.

Analysis of variance and stepwise multiple regression were used to analyze the data. The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences ($SPSS^X$ 3.1) at The Pennsylvania State University.

Results

Characteristics of Vocational Educators

Three hundred thirty-six secondary vocational teachers participated in the study; 261 (78%) were male. No female automotive or carpentry teachers responded. The mean age of the teachers was 43 years, and they taught vocational education a mean of 14 years. Teachers reported that a mean of 33 students were enrolled in their programs and that 60% of the students who enrolled in their courses joined Vocational Student Organizations (VSO). However, 51 teachers (16%) indicated they did not have any VSO members.

The following section summarizes the sociodemographic data for the 336 secondary vocational educators who participated in the study. The results are presented using vocational area as the primary grouping factor for the teachers.

Distribution of Respondents

Data in Figure 1 indicate that 84% of the agricultural teachers, 62% of the automobile mechanic instructors, 66% of the carpentry instructors, and 73% of the home economics teachers responded to the survey.

Distribution of Gender

Data presented in Figure 2 indicate that the majority of agricultural teachers are male (90%). No female carpentry or automobile mechanic instructors responded. Forty percent of the home economics teachers were male.

Additional Occupation

Data presented in Figure 3 show the number of teachers in the sample who are currently employed in another occupation in addition to teaching. Forty-six percent of agricultural educators, 42% of carpentry instructors, 59% of automobile mechanic instructors, and 35% of home economics teachers are employed in a job other than teaching. There was no significant difference between teaching area and additional occupation.

Certification

Data in Figure 4 show the type of educational certification held by vocational teachers in the sample. There is a significant difference between certification type and teaching area (p=.000). The majority of agricultural instructors (86%) hold an Instructional I or II certificate. Yet 78% of carpentry and automobile mechanic instructors hold a Vocational I or II certificate. About one half of home economics teachers (47%) hold an Instructional I or II certificate and 45% hold a Vocational I or II certificate.

Average Number of Students in Program

Data presented in Figure 5 indicate that there is a significant difference between the average number of students in the program and teaching area (p=.000). Agricultural educators on the average have more students in their program (n=39) than any other vocational group. Home economics teachers on the average had the least number of students in their programs (n=27). However, the average number of students in all four programs ranges from 27-39.

Vocational Student Organization Membership

Data presented in Figure 6 indicate that approximately three fourths of the students enrolled in agricultural eduction programs are members of a Vocational Student Organizations (VSO). There is a significant difference between VSO membership and teaching area (p=.000). Home economics instructors reported a VSO membership rate of 64%. Automobile

mechanics instructors (36%) and carpentry instructors (40%) reported less than one half of their students belong to a VSO.

Years Taught

Data presented in Figure 7 indicate there is little difference between vocational teaching area and years taught. The mean number of years taught for agricultural and automobile mechanics instructors is 15 years. The mean number of years taught for carpentry and home economics teachers is 13 years. There is no significant difference between years taught and teaching area.

Age

Data presented in Figure 8 show the average age of vocational instructor by teaching area. There is a significant difference between age and teaching area (p=.000). The mean age for agricultural educators is 41, carpentry and home economics teachers had a mean age of 47, and automobile mechanics instructors had a mean age of 51 years.

Contract Length

There is a significant difference between contract length and teaching area (p=.004). Data in Figure 9 indicate that 70% of agricultural educators have teaching contracts between 10 and 12 months. The rest of the vocational teacher groups are divided equally between contracts that are less than or equal to 9 months and contracts between 10 and 12 months in length.

AVA Membership

Data in Figure 10 indicate that the majority of all vocational teacher groups do not belong to the American Vocational Association. Twenty-one percent of the agricultural educators, 23% of automobile mechanic, 25% of the carpentry and 17% of the home economics instructors indicated they are members of AVA. There was no significant difference between teaching area and AVA membership.

Commitment to Student Organizations

The mean commitment to vocational student organizations score for the teachers was 3.21 on a 5-point scale which indicates that teachers were slightly above average in their commitment. There is a significant difference between commitment to student organizations and teaching area (p=.000). When student organization commitment was analyzed by the vocational teacher group, agriculture teachers were the most committed (3.9), followed by occupational home economics teachers (3.2) and carpentry instructors (2.5). Automotive instructors (2.2) were least committed to student organizations (see Table 1).

Table 1. Commitment to Student Organizations by Vocational Teaching Area.

Variable	Mean Score	df	SS	F	p
Teaching area		3	129.99	43.8	.000
Ag Ed	3.9				
Auto	2.2				
Carpentry	2.5				
Home Ec	3.2				
Error		304	.807		
Total		307	430.81		

A stepwise multiple regression analysis indicated that vocational student organization membership rate was the best predictor of commitment to student organizations. Commitment to student organizations increased as the VSO membership rate increased. In addition, being an agriculture instructor as opposed to being in the other three educational areas increases the degree of commitment to student organizations. Agricultural education, carpentry and occupational home economics teachers as a group are more committed to student organizations than automotive instructors (see Table 2).

Table 2. Stepwise Regression of Commitment to Student Organizations on Selected Demographic and Programmatic Variables.

Variable	Multiple R	R^2	Beta	f value
Vocational Student Organization Membership	.59	.35	.5078	106.3*
Ag Education Teachers	.67	.44	.2772	10.4*
Automotive Instructors	.68	.47	-.1075	3.9*

*$p \leq .05$

Commitment to community involvement

The mean commitment score to community involvement for the teachers was 3.26 on a 5-point scale which indicates that teachers were committed some of the time to community invovlement. Those teachers who were married were less committed to community involvement (3.2) than those teachers who were single, divorced, or widowed (3.5) see Table 3.

Table 3. Commitment to Community Involvement by Marital Status.

Variable	Mean Score	df	SS	F	p
Marital Status		1	3.32	5.55	.019
Single, Divorced Widowed	3.5				
Married	3.2				
Error		311	186.5		
Total		312	189.8		

Job satisfaction of teachers

There was no difference between the occupational satisfaction of teachers when analyzed by vocational teacher group. On a summated scale of 14 to 70 the mean satisfaction score for teachers was 59, indicating that teachers were moderately satisfied with their job.

Conclusions

1. Agricultural education teachers are significantly more committed to student organizations than occupational home economics teachers, carpentry instructors and automotive instructors.

2. The best predictor of commitment to student organizations is vocational student organization membership rate. Agricultural educators reported the highest VSO membership rate (73%), while occupational home economics and carpentry instructors reported 64% and 40% VSO membership rates, respectively. Automotive instructors reported the lowest VSO membership rate (36%).

3. Married teachers were significantly less committed to community involvement than those teachers who were not married.

4. There was no difference between teaching areas in regard to job satisfaction.

The above results related to student organization commitment may be partially explained by several factors inherent in the way vocational education is delivered in Pennsylvania. Eighty-five vocational-technical schools offer instruction at secondary and postsecondary levels. Senior high school students are typically transported for half the school day to vocational schools for specialized instruction in areas such as carpentry, building trades, or cosmetology. They spend the other half of the school day in their respective home schools in academic classes. The ability of vocational teachers to organize and work with student organizations may be compounded by the problem of distance and difficulties associated with students getting transportation home. Most agricultural education teachers in the commonwealth do not encounter this problem. While 73% of the secondary agriculture departments in Pennsylvania are located in comprehensive high schools, 70% of the occupational home economics programs, 77% of the automotive programs, and 84% of the carpentry programs are located in vocational schools. Finally, participation in Pennsylvania VSO (60%) is high when compared with previous findings that 27-77% of students in grades 9-12 participated in extracurricular activities and clubs (Verro, 1976).

The finding concerning marital status and community involvement commitment may be explained several ways. Those individuals who are married may spend more time with families/spouse. And/or these individuals may be older and more established in the community and do not devote as much time and energy to community involvement activities.

Recommendations and Questions for Further Study

The findings achieved in this preliminary research raise several important questions. Is the rate of student participation in a VSO a true indicator of the teachers' commitment to student organizations? Is membership in a VSO a reflection of the students' perceived value of VSO, which in turn is positively or negatively influenced by the teachers' opinion of VSO? If students benefit from participation in vocational student organizations as several authors suggest (Bender, 1964; Welton, 1971; Squires, 1974; Collins, 1977; Oregon State Department of Education, 1977; Phipps, 1980; Neff, 1982; Carter & Neason, 1984; Debertin & Williamson, 1987; Miller, 1988), then vocational administrators and secondary vocational educators should focus on increasing the local VSO participation. In addition, vocational teachers and their administrators should allow time in the school day for VSO meetings and provide credit for enrolling and participating in a VSO. Additional research is needed to verify the findings of this study.

Figure 1. Distribution of respondents by teaching area

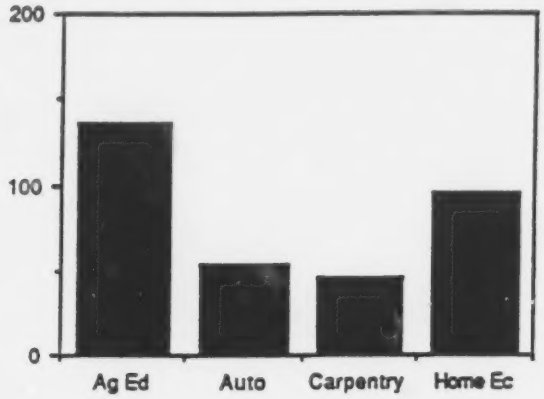


Figure 2. Distribution of respondents by teaching area and gender

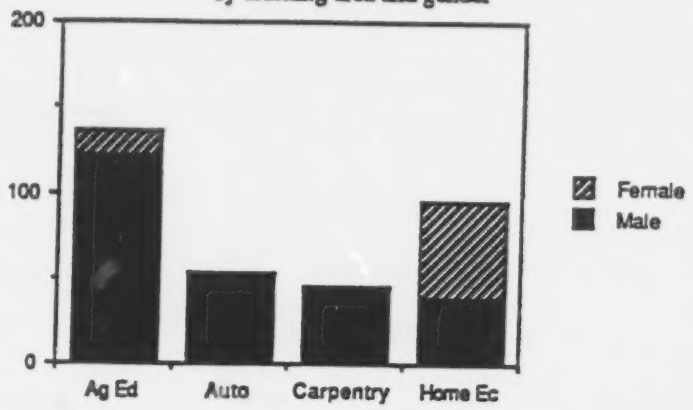


Figure 3. Distribution of respondents by additional occupation

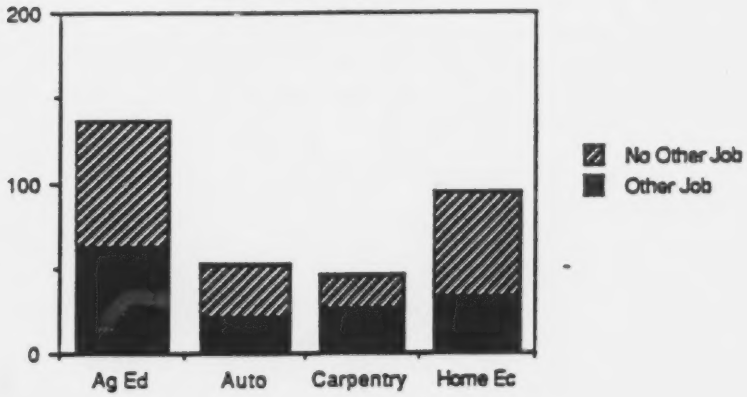


Figure 4. Distribution of respondents by certification type and teaching area

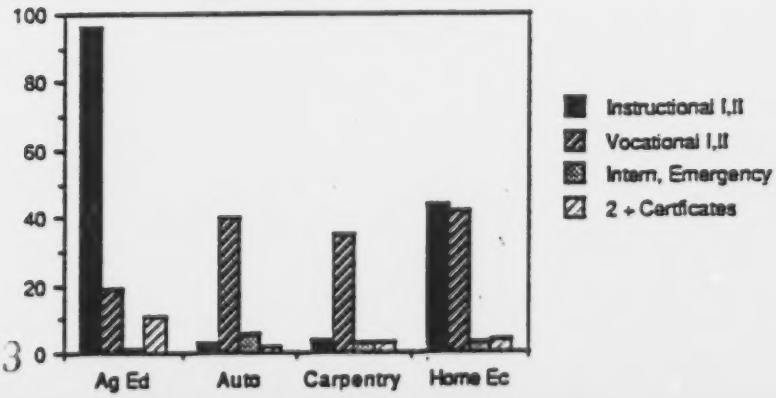


Figure 5. Distribution of average number of students in program by teaching area

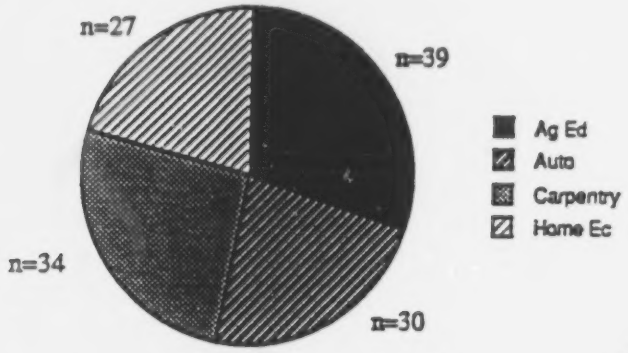


Figure 6. Distribution of VSO membership by teaching area

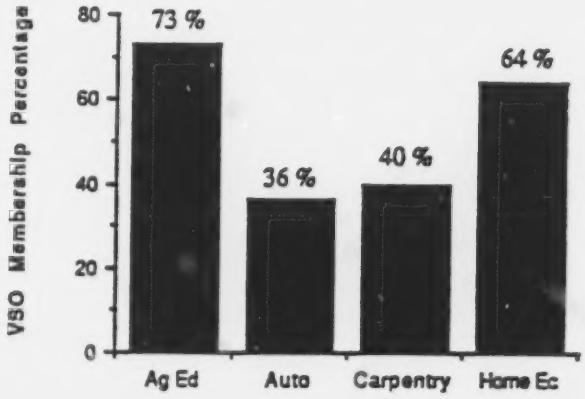


Figure 7. Distribution of years taught by teaching area

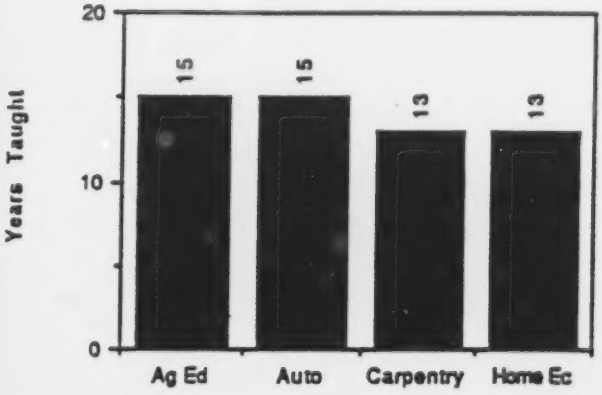


Figure 8. Average age of respondents by teaching area

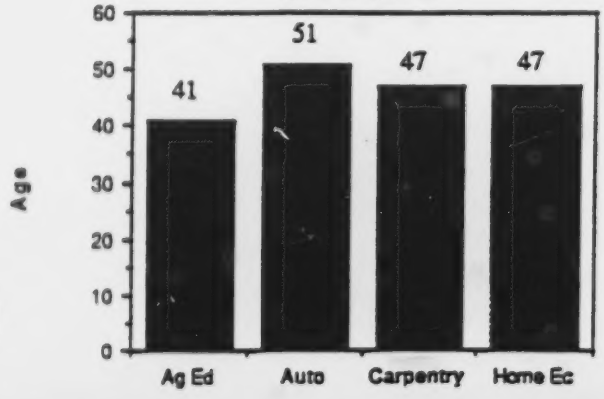


Figure 9. Distribution of contract length by teaching area

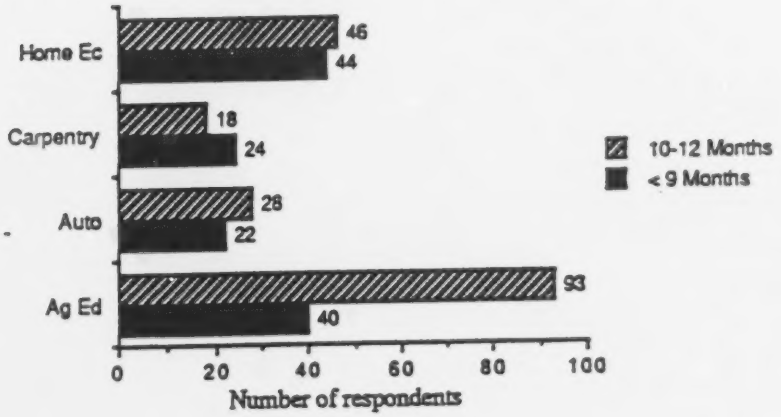
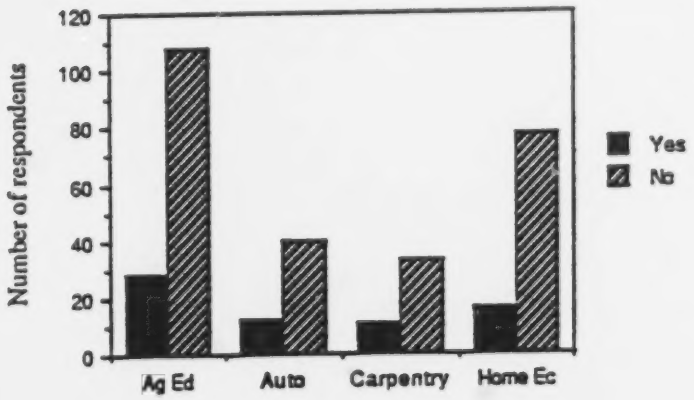


Figure 10. Distribution of AVA membership by teaching area



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